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Impact of Educational Apps and Technology on Student Engagement and Academic Performance in Secondary Level: A Systematic Review

Lzeil C. Hernandez[1], Nedie B. Sevilla[2]
[1]*University of Saint Anthony, Iriga City*
[2]*Dr. Emilio B. Espinosa, Sr. Memorial State College of Agriculture and Technology*
[1]*lzeilhernandez3@gmail.com*
[2]*nedie.sevilla1026@gmail.com*

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ABSTRACT

This systematic review examines the impact of educational applications and technology on student engagement and academic performance at the secondary level. Drawing from recent empirical studies and quantitative analyses, the review synthesizes findings on how digital tools such as mobile devices, laptops, and learning applications can affect motivation, participation, and achievement of students. Evidence suggests that while technology integration can enhance student interest and provide flexible learning opportunities, it can also influence the academic outcomes varies depending on usage patterns, purpose, and integration within pedagogy. Most studies indicate that students perceive educational technologies as beneficial, particularly when aligned with instructional objectives, though potential distractions remain a concern. Overall, the findings highlight the importance of strategic implementation, teacher facilitation, and balanced digital engagement to maximize academic benefits of the students.

Keywords: *Educational Apps, Technology Integration, Student Engagement, Academic Performance, Secondary Education*

INTRODUCTION

The rapid advancement of digital technologies has transformed the landscape of secondary education, reshaping how students' access, process, and apply knowledge. These days, many people use web-based platforms, mobile devices, and educational applications to improve the teaching and learning process (Borisova et al., 2016). According to Alla (2018), these technologies provide interactive and adaptable learning opportunities that can boost student interest and encourage self-directed learning.

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The idea that educational applications and technology can increase student motivation, facilitate differentiated instruction, and enhance academic performance has motivated the use of these technologies in classrooms in recent years (Muhammad et al., 2022). But there is a complicated relationship between achievement and technological use. When usage lacks instructional guidance, some studies report little to no quantitative advantages in academic achievements, while other study indicates significant benefits in comprehension and skill development (Garcia et al., 2022).

The purpose of this systematic review is to compile the most recent research on the use of technology and educational applications in secondary education, with an emphasis on how these factors affect academic achievement and student involvement. It looks for recurring patterns, identifies elements that affect efficacy, and offers suggestions to educators and legislators who want to maximize the use of technology in the classroom.

METHODS

Research Design

This study adopts a systematic review design, following structured methods to identify, analyze, and synthesize existing research on the impact of educational applications and technology on student engagement and academic performance in secondary education. This approach ensures a comprehensive and unbiased representation of the current evidence base, enabling conclusions to be drawn from multiple studies rather than a single source.

Search Strategy

A targeted search was conducted across academic databases, online journals, and institutional repositories to identify peer-reviewed articles, theses, and conference proceedings relevant to the topic. Keywords used in the search included “educational apps,” “technology integration,” “student engagement,” “academic performance,” “secondary education,” and “digital learning tools.” Boolean operators and truncations (e.g., “AND,” “OR”) were applied to broaden or narrow the search results as necessary.

The selection of studies was limited to publications within the last 15 years to ensure the findings reflected the modern technological context of secondary education.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Studies were included if they met the following criteria:

1. Focused on secondary-level students (Grades 7–12).
2. Investigated the use of educational applications, gadgets, or technology in relation to student engagement and/or academic performance.
3. Used empirical methods, including quantitative, qualitative, or mixed-method approaches.
4. Were published in English.

Studies were excluded if they:

1. Focused solely on primary or tertiary education levels.
2. Addressed technology use outside formal education contexts.
3. Lacked sufficient methodological detail or measurable outcomes related to engagement or academic performance.

Data Analysis

The use of devices with purpose and guidance improves student engagement and can help academic performance, according to a recurring theme in the 25 studies we reviewed. Higher participation and interest in lessons were reported in studies that integrated interactive platforms like Go-Lab, Kahoot, and QR codes (Gniezdilova, 2021; Ratnasari & Haryanto, 2019). ICT interventions for students with disabilities also produce positive outcomes (Ashindoitiang & Ekoro, 2024), and quasi-experimental evidence indicates that structured mobile learning activities improve language outcomes when compared to unguided use (Ng et al., 2020).

However, there are conflicting results regarding academic performance. Devices used for curriculum-aligned tasks have been shown to have positive effects (Asamoah et al., 2017; Hidayatika et al., 2019). However, a number of studies have linked excessive or non-academic use to increased procrastination and lower grades (Esther, 2012; Garcia et al., 2022; Patil et al., 2023). This implies that teacher mediation and instructional design play a major role in the educational impact of devices.

Notable are non-academic results as well. Adolescents and young children who use gadgets excessively have been linked to sleep disturbances, vision problems, and decreased social interaction (Kulkarni & Bhore, 2019; Lake & Chusnatayaini, 2023; Tri Peni et al.). Given that insufficient infrastructure and skills can limit benefits, teacher preparedness and ICT proficiency become crucial moderators (Borisova et al., 2016; Toleubekova et al., 2016).

In conclusion, research shows that devices can be useful learning aids when used in a structured, goal-aligned, and teacher-supported manner. However, excessive or unguided use of these devices can have negative effects on behavior, academic performance, and health (Gniezdilova, 2021; Ng et al., 2020; Kulkarni & Bhore, 2019).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This systematic review analyzed 25 peer-reviewed studies published between 2012 and 2024 on the educational impact of gadgets and ICT tools across various learner groups. The studies encompassed research from diverse countries, including the Philippines, India, Indonesia, Russia, Ghana, Malaysia, and Uzbekistan, and covered educational levels from early childhood to tertiary education. Thematic analysis identified three major trends: (1) enhancement of learning outcomes through guided gadget use, (2) adverse effects linked to excessive and non-academic use, and (3) critical role of teacher competence and mediation.

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A majority of studies (n=14) reported positive learning outcomes when gadgets were used purposefully for curriculum-aligned activities. Examples include mobile-assisted language learning interventions (Ng et al., 2020), ICT-supported teaching for students with disabilities (Ashindoitiang & Ekoro, 2024), and use of platforms like Go-Lab and Kahoot to boost engagement (Gniezdilova, 2021; Ratnasari & Haryanto, 2019).

Conversely, 8 studies found negative or mixed effects, highlighting issues such as reduced academic performance from gadget overuse (Esther, 2012; Garcia et al., 2022; Patil et al., 2023), procrastination, sleep disturbances, vision problems, and diminished social skills (Kulkarni & Bhore, 2019; Lake & Chusnatayaini, 2023).

Three studies focused primarily on teacher competence and readiness, showing that insufficient ICT training and limited access to devices reduce the benefits of technology integration (Borisova et al., 2016; Toleubekova et al., 2016; Sattarov & Khaitova, 2022).

Author(s) & Year	Title of Study	Research Design & Methods	Participants	Key Findings
Alla (2018)	Students' perceptions of integrating mobile devices in English learning	Quantitative survey; descriptive analysis	Secondary students in an EFL classroom	Students viewed mobile devices as valuable tools for improving language skills and engagement, provided usage was structured and guided by teachers.
Borisova et al. (2016)	Using gadgets in teaching economics	Descriptive study; classroom observation	High school economics students	Integration of gadgets enhanced interactive learning and access to resources, fostering student participation.
Esther (2012)	Influence of excessive gadget use on academic performance	Mixed methods; surveys & interviews	Secondary-level adolescents	Excessive non-academic gadget use was linked to lower performance and reduced family interaction; moderation recommended.
Garcia et al. (2022)	Gadget dependency and academic procrastination	Quantitative correlational design	Grade 12 STEM students	High gadget dependency correlated with increased procrastination, though educational uses could still promote learning when monitored.
Lake & Chusnatayaini (2023)	Influence of gadget media on early development	Literature review	Review of early childhood studies	Findings suggest early gadget exposure affects developmental skills;

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				implications for guided technology use at higher levels.
Lutfiani (2018)	Gadget use and study habits in English learning	Qualitative study	Senior high school students	Gadget use supported flexible learning and independent study habits when integrated with lesson plans.
Muhammad et al. (2022)	Effects of gadgets on academic performance in Islamabad	Quantitative survey	Secondary students	No significant difference in performance across device types; educational use perceived as beneficial by most respondents.
Yadav et al. (2021)	Impact of mobile phone dependence on behavior and academic performance	Descriptive correlational study	285 adolescents, India	Mobile phone dependency significantly correlated with negative behavior and lower academic performance.
Kulkarni & Bhore (2019)	Effects of electronic gadgets on health status among secondary school students	Cross-sectional survey	36 secondary students, Maharashtra, India	Gadget use associated with vision, sleep, digestion problems; need for awareness and guidance.
Bhatti et al. (2020)	Effects of gadgets on students' academic performance at secondary level in Islamabad	Descriptive survey	Secondary students, Islamabad	Gadgets improve educational performance and help in problem-solving but excessive use affects health and performance.
Asamoah et al. (2017)	Students' experience with ICT devices and applications for learning and academic performance	Cross-sectional survey	320 university students, Ghana	ICT expenditures and email use improved GPA; iPad use negatively affected GPA.
Ng et al. (2020)	Guided mobile learning interventions in ESL classrooms	Quasi-experimental study	419 Malaysian students	Guided mobile device use improved language performance; unguided use did not.
Othman et al. (2020)	Impact of electronic gadget use on academic performance and health status	Descriptive cross-sectional	233 secondary students, Malaysia	More than 6 hours of daily gadget use linked to high dependency and poorer academic results.

ISSN: 3116-3475
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Hidayatika et al. (2019)	Influence of gadget use on academic achievement of Physics students	Quantitative correlation	Physics students, Indonesia	Positive correlation between gadget use and GPA.
Patil et al. (2023)	Effects of mobile phone usage on academic performance	Cross-sectional survey	274 university students, India	Usage patterns influence outcomes; beneficial for study but also a major distraction.
Ratnasari & Haryanto (2019)	Utilization of gadgets as effective learning media	Descriptive study	Grade VIII junior high school students, Indonesia	Gadgets as learning media increased comfort, efficiency, and achievement.
Rumapea (2022)	Popular culture in gadget use among university students	Descriptive survey	University students, Indonesia	Gadgets central to social life; academic uses secondary; excessive social media use wastes study time.
Sattarov & Khaitova (2020)	Mobile learning as new forms and methods of education	Literature review	University students, Uzbekistan	Students technically and psychologically ready for mobile learning; adoption should be expanded.
Pratama et al. (2019)	Influence of internet technology on teaching and learning	Survey	Students & teachers, Indonesia	Internet enhances flexibility in learning and teaching methods.
Toleubekova et al. (2016)	Use of IT in improving teacher competence	Literature review	Higher education teachers, Kazakhstan	Teacher IT competence is essential for improving teaching quality.
Saruji et al. (2017)	Impact of ICT and gadgets among young children	Literature review & interviews	Young children (4–12 years old), Malaysia	ICT enhances motivation, memory, and understanding; model factors: motivation, acceptance, ease of use, usability.
Sholekah et al. (2023)	Influence of gadgets on learning achievement of elementary students	Quantitative (ex post facto)	141 Grade 4 students, Indonesia	Gadget use explained 23.5% of learning outcome variance.
Gniezdilova (2021)	Use of gadgets in biology classes	Experimental	Secondary school students, Ukraine	Kahoot, QR codes, online labs improved motivation and participation.

The review confirms that guided gadget integration—where technology use is aligned with clear pedagogical objectives—can enhance student engagement, improve performance, and foster digital literacy. This finding aligns with Ng et al. (2020), who demonstrated that structured mobile learning modules

significantly outperformed unguided usage in ESL contexts. Similarly, Asamoah et al. (2017) showed that targeted ICT expenditures and email-based academic communication improved university students' grades.

However, excessive, unsupervised, or entertainment-oriented gadget use remains a critical risk factor for both academic and personal well-being. Esther (2012) and Garcia et al. (2022) reported that high dependency on gadgets was strongly correlated with procrastination and lower grades. Patil et al. (2023) further emphasized that mobile phone distractions negatively affected focus, despite the devices' educational potential. These findings mirror earlier evidence on technology overuse leading to diminished academic outcomes and social isolation (Kulkarni & Bhore, 2019; Lake & Chusnatayaini, 2023).

The teacher's role emerges as a pivotal moderator. Studies by Borisova et al. (2016) and Toleubekova et al. (2016) show that educators' ICT competence directly impacts the quality of technology integration. Without adequate professional development, teachers may default to passive or inefficient use of devices, limiting potential benefits.

Overall, this review underscores the double-edged nature of gadget use in education. When implemented with clear pedagogical intent, appropriate guidance, and teacher preparedness, gadgets can significantly improve learning outcomes. Conversely, without structure and regulation, their overuse can undermine both academic performance and students' holistic well-being.

CONCLUSIONS

This systematic review synthesized evidence from 25 studies examining the impact of gadgets and ICT on students' learning outcomes, motivation, social development, and health. Across varied contexts, findings consistently indicate that gadgets can be valuable educational tools when integrated purposefully, enhancing engagement, improving access to learning resources, and supporting academic performance (Gniezdilova, 2021; Asamoah et al., 2017). However, excessive or unregulated use is linked to negative outcomes such as academic procrastination (Garcia et al., 2022), reduced social interaction (Tri Peni et al., 2020), and adverse health effects (Kulkarni & Bhore, 2019). The evidence emphasizes that the educational benefits of gadgets are maximized when usage is guided, content is educationally aligned, and screen time is balanced with other developmental activities. The integration of ICT must therefore be accompanied by teacher training, parental guidance, and school policies that promote responsible digital habits.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Integrate ICT into curricula with structured guidance – Schools should embed gadget use in lesson plans with clear learning objectives, ensuring technology supplements rather than distracts from academic goals (Ng et al., 2020).

2. Teacher professional development – Training should focus on pedagogical strategies for maximizing gadget use in learning, assessing digital literacy, and managing classroom technology (Toleubekova et al., 2016).
3. Parental involvement – Parents should be encouraged to monitor and co-engage in their children's gadget activities to reinforce positive usage and mitigate overuse (Mira Adila et al., 2017).
4. Balanced usage policies – Schools and education departments should develop screen-time guidelines to prevent negative impacts on health, social interaction, and academic focus (Yadav et al., 2021).
5. Further research on vulnerable groups – More studies are needed on learners with disabilities, early childhood populations, and low-resource settings to ensure ICT policies are inclusive and equitable (Ashindoitiang & Ekoro, 2024).

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